

XXI. An Account of the Case of a supposed Hydrophobia: In a Letter to the Rev. Thomas Birch, D. D. Secretary to the Royal Society, from the Right Honourable James Earl of Morton, President of the Royal Society.

Brook-Street, Wednesday, April 24, 1765.

Rev. Sir ;

HAVING read a remarkable account in the Public Advertiser of the 22d of June, 1764, that a person, who, in consequence of the bite of a mad dog, was affected with the Hydrophobia, had been cured at Padua by draughts of vinegar, I was willing to get the best information of the true state of the fact. Accordingly I wrote to my acquaintance General Græme, commander in chief of the Venetian forces, desiring he would send me an accurate history of this extraordinary cure; and some time ago I received from him the inclosed account; which, if you think proper, you may read before the Society. The account in the Public Advertiser, being so very particular and circumstantial, induced me at first to

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believe it might be well founded ; in which case, so valuable a discovery ought to have been published every where : but, as it turns out to be altogether a fallacy, the public ought equally to be undeceived.

I am,

Rev. Sir,

Your very humble servant,

Morton.

Venice, December 8, 1764.

Read April 25, 1765. **T**HE history of the Hydrophobia cured by vinegar is equivocal, or perhaps altogether a mistake ; and the process was what follows.

Dr. Bertofsi, physician, and now professor in the university of Padua, came to Venice in the last spring, and brought an account to Dr. Reghellini, that three hydrophobous persons, all bit by the same mad dog, had been treated in the hospital at Padua, two of whom died, and only one escaped, and that the person, who survived, was cured by Dr. Leonissa with vinegar, which he was made to swallow every three hours in doses of about four ounces at a time. This cure, performed by Dr. Leonissa, was suggested to him by a student of physic at Udine, who observed, in the Friuli, a hydrophobous person, who was cured by

by means of a mistake, that happened in the family, by giving him vinegar to drink instead of water [a].

Dr. Reghellini, willing to be thoroughly satisfied, whether this acceptable discovery was strictly true, did immediately write to a friend of his, a physician at Padua, stating all the circumstances, which had been related to him by Dr. Bertoffi, and desiring to know, if the fact really was as it had been stated. His friend, the physician, gave him for answer, that the thing was true.

Dr. Reghellini thereupon communicated the case to the physicians of the hospital of Florence and Pisa, and desired them to make trial of it, the first opportunity that should offer, and acquaint him with the success. He likewise communicated it to his other friends, amongst which was Dr. Turton, an English physician then at Venice; and to Dr. de la Fontaine, a physician, who attended Lord Spencer [b].

Dr. Reghellini judged, that so uncommon an event ought to be published with all its circumstances; and having in his possession the history of eight and twenty hydrophobous persons, though in different manners, and treated by different physicians, fifteen of whom were afterwards opened, and the bodies carefully examined, he thought from thence he might compose a rational and useful tract. Therefore he went to Padua, to have a personal interview with Count Leonissa, the physician; but in this conference he discovered, that the man, who was said to

[a] Dr. Bertoffi said in the Friuli. Count Leonissa says in Lombardy. Perhaps some other person may have said in Turin.

[b] Probably the account published in England may have come from one of these two gentlemen.

have been cured with the use of vinegar, really never had the hydrophobia, although he had been assured, that Dr. Bertoffi saw him in the hydrophobous state. That man, it was true, did receive a very slight and superficial scratch upon his cheek from the same dog, who bit the other two persons, who became hydrophobous, and afterwards died ; but the person, of whom the account was published, about the useful discovery of a cure by vinegar, was in reality never arrived to the state of the hydrophobia ; that is to say, to such a degree of the malady, as most frequently follows the bite of a mad dog, and which, after some weeks, discovers itself by an uneasiness in attempting to drink ; and after drinking, by a fever, delirium, convulsions, vomiting, sweating, and death, within the fifth, and sometimes within the fourth day.

Dr. Reghellini, having thus found, that the account first given him, and the confirmation of it from his friend at Padua, were doubtful, or rather a misapprehension, wrote again to Florence and Pisa, retracting his former account, and relating the fact, as upon a more strict examination he had found it truly to be, and which is exactly agreeable to the account here inclosed.